

APRIL 23, 1987

Different than any other spring of modern record in the Shortgrass Country, grass and weeds have pushed ahead of the season. Cows nursing big calves have come out of the winter fat; ewes are raising twins as easy as they would a single lamb. Abundant winter rains have turned some dry draws into running creeks, and the river over at Mertzon is once again flowing clear spring water.

The wild game seems to have joined this festival of growth. In an open pasture, that rarely has a deer, one of our horseback hands counted 19 in one bunch. It's too early for fawns, but from the open style running the does show, it looks like they are in shape for a good crop.

Wild turkey have extended their range from the rivers out into our country, too. The road from the ranch to Mertzon has 15 miles of dirt track. Part of that is an unfenced straight-away, swept clean by a grader man with a special touch, that encourages high speeds. Late yesterday afternoon I was using that stretch to make up for the rough portions. At 5:34 daylight savings time, a big turkey gobbler took off from the left barrow ditch and collided with my pickup windshield as my ground speed reached 65 miles per hour.

I want to report right off that the turkey was the big loser. By the time I had stopped, he was lying on the hood, making life's last struggle by scratching deep marks in the metal. Splinters of glass had coated my clothes and hair like a pan of shaved ice had been thrown into the front seat. I froze and waited for blood to start spurting from my chest, or my eyesight to blur into darkness. But not one part of me was so much as scratched.

After I got out and threw the turkey in the ditch, I called one of the guys I work with on the radio to get him to call the circuit windshield man who makes house calls to the ranches to install glass. At that moment a pattern was set that was to be the same every time I mentioned my accident. He wanted to know if the turkey was fat.

Please allow me to pause and say that it's my opinion when our Heavenly Father designed and installed a stomach for man, He put in the most sensitive organ of the whole body. Here I was covered in shattered glass, alone on a deserted road, and the primary question was whether the perpetrator of the accident was fat.

I was able to reach the ranch by creeping along at 15 miles per hour. Later, by telephone, I learned that my insurer was protected against high speed drivers and low flying wild turkeys, confirming my belief that my underwriters are among the world's most careful operators when it comes to covering their own exposures.

I am still brushing glass from my boots and out of my pants cuffs. Now and then a black pin feather floats up from behind the seat. I had no idea that a good spring could be dangerous.